



How long does a pointe shoe last?

The average life of a pointe shoe is somewhere between 4-12 HOURS of dancing. If your daughter is en pointe 15 minutes per class twice per week, her shoes may last 8-20 weeks. If your daughter is en pointe for a 1 ½ hour class followed by 2 hours of rehearsal 3 times per week, she may be lucky to get 3-4 weeks of use out of a pair of shoes.

The type of dance she is doing will also affect the life of the shoe. If your daughter is taking partnering class and spending a lot of time in supported poses, her shoes will wear out faster than if she is doing relevés at the barre.

Of course average means that some dancers can wear one pair of shoes for a year and another dancer will go through 2 pairs per week. The guidelines above are what we have observed as dancers, the longevity of a shoe is very personal and very difficult to predict.

Why does the life of the shoe vary so much?

The life of a pointe depends on the paste the manufacturer uses, how the dancer treats the shoes between classes, how much the dancer perspires, how strong the dancer is, the number of classes the dancer takes, how long her rehearsals are, what steps she is rehearsing, how humid the weather is, etc.

How will I know if a shoe is “defective”?

Unless the shank snaps the very first time a dancer goes en pointe, the shoe is not defective. Anything else is “normal” wear. Sometimes the same brand, same style, same size shoe will be “dead” in a much shorter period of time than others. This does not mean the shoe was defective, it just means the shoe was on the low end of its normal, expected life.

Pointe shoes are handmade, and that means a specific model/size may not have the exact same nuances of fit each time. Manufacturers rarely consider a shoe defective based on fit differences. Therefore, we encourage dancers to try on EACH PAIR of shoes and decide if you like them enough to keep BEFORE you sew on ribbons or elastic.

How will my daughter know when it is time for a new pair of shoes?

Shoes should be replaced when the platform is no longer stiff, when the box becomes unsupportive or soft, or when the shank is no longer supportive. The dancer will start to notice these things because she will start noticing pain in areas she never felt, will start “falling off” pointe when she tries to balance, or will fall forward out of turns and moving piques.

Why did the box wear out before the shank? Is the shoe defective?

Ideally the box and the shank should wear out at close to the same time. However, this rarely happens in practice. Sometimes if the shank is not supporting the dancer the box will wear out very quickly. A change in shank can sometimes help (usually to a more flexible shank to accommodate more support in the arch). The opposite is also true, if the dancer is not supported by the box the shank can wear out much more quickly than the box. It is a trial and error process, and sometimes for comfort or performance dancers will live with unequal wear in their shoes.

How much do pointe shoes cost?

Shoes at Prima Bodywear range from \$50.00 to over \$100.00 per pair. We have tried less expensive styles, and received too many complaints about the quality and performance for us to continue to carry those brands in our stock. We work very hard to provide you with a selection of pointe shoes that will give you or your daughter the best performance. Unfortunately, we just cannot carry all brands and all styles in all sizes, but we are happy to order them for you to try on in the store (at no obligation to purchase).

Why are pointe shoes so expensive?

Pointe shoes are hand-made and take hours to finish one pair of shoes. They are a piece of protective equipment for the dancer. A properly fit shoe will protect a dancer's ankles, arches and metatarsal joints. Just as with any other athletic activity, when your child reaches the advanced level of achievement or competition, the equipment costs a lot of money. Make sure you are ready to make the monetary commitment before your child begins pointe work.

Why do you charge so much more than the online catalogs?

Generally our pointe shoe prices are about 10-15% more than the online price plus shipping. Honestly, mostly what you are paying for is service. At Prima, you don't pay extra for shipping and handling, we never charge for pointe shoe fittings, you get your shoe immediately, you get the opportunity to try on multiple sizes and multiple styles before you buy, you can try on styles not available through catalogs...and you never have to pay return shipping for shoes that don't fit.

Additionally, we offer a 'buy four get the fifth pair free' discount cards, which results in 20% off. If you are a serious student or professional dancer, you will average LESS per pair of shoes than if you order online and you will receive superior customer service from us.

Why does my daughter's teacher have to approve the shoes, aren't you confident you fit her correctly?

We do our best to fit pointe shoes based on our experience and education. We also try to customize the fit, knowing that some teachers in town prefer certain fit variations. However, your daughter's teacher is THE BEST JUDGE of how your daughter dances, her strength, her good aspects and her bad habits. No stock shoes fit a dancer perfectly, we are always making compromises. Sometimes the compromise we make is not the best for the dancer based on the TEACHER's opinion. In those cases we are more than happy to do a re-fit to accommodate the concerns of the instructor.

My daughter tried a new brand of shoes, and doesn't like them very much. Why did Prima talk her into a different style than she had before?

Finding the "right" pointe shoe is a lot of trial and error. Many dancers like to experiment with different shoes. You may love the way the shoes feel in the store, and hate them during class. You may prefer

one brand of shoe over another for adagio or allegro. You may love the feel one brand but prefer the longevity of another. It is UP TO THE DANCER to decide works best for her, and sometimes trying a shoe you don't end up liking is the only way to tell. We can fit the shoes so they look good at the barre in the store....we cannot predict how the shoe will feel while dancing. Sometimes the shoe just isn't a good match with the dancer's style.

How can we be sure my daughter gets an appropriate shoe for her?

Sometimes during a fitting, especially for the first pair of pointe shoes, the dancer is unsure of what she is supposed to be feeling or what feels good. Our fitters do our best to ask a lot of questions to make sure she will purchase a well-fitting shoe. Sometimes we get a very shy or very uncommunicative dancer. Encourage your daughter to voice her opinion in the store and help us determine what is best for her. We can only know what we hear during the fitting, and it is distressing to us to find out later that the student was not comfortable in the shoe and didn't tell us. We can't read minds, so help us help you find the best shoe for you.

Since she was properly fit in pointe shoes, will my daughter be free from all pain and any blisters?

No. No. No. Pointe work hurts. Dancers use muscles during pointe work that are never used in any other sport or activity. In addition to muscular pain, pointe work stresses joints (not unlike running or weight lifting). Finally, sometimes due to swollen feet, humidity, unusual perspiration, different tights or socks.....blisters can happen. A properly fit shoe will mitigate these problems but will not eliminate all pain.

Toe-tape and/or medical tape wrapped around toes can prevent blisters.

What type of padding is the best?

Pointe shoe padding is another personal decision made by the student after listening to her teacher's recommendations. Paper toweling is the least expensive, but is disposed after each wear. Loose wool is the next most inexpensive option, and is to some degree re-useable. The most durable options are fabric covered thin gel pads. Other options include non-covered silicone gel pads and foam pads.

All padding changes the fit of the shoe. If you change your padding, you must understand your shoe may not fit or perform the same.

Why do I need toe spacers?

Sometimes toe spacers are recommended for dancers that have a large space between the big toe and the second toe. The spacer keeps the big toe in a more vertical alignment to alleviate diagonal pressure on the metatarsal joint. It is believed spacers can help prevent or minimize bunion pain and formation.

Sometimes a dancer has very soft muscle tissue in the feet, so the feet compress when on pointe. Compressibility causes a pointe shoe to be too small when standing or jumping and too big when en pointe. Using toe spacers will minimize the difference in size when standing and en pointe.

Can my daughter "soften" the shoe before she wears them to make them more comfortable?

Some dancers "help" the break-in process by putting alcohol or water in the metatarsal area. Some dancers hand-manipulate the shank to soften the shank or pre-mold the shank to their preference. Some dancers score the shank with a razor to create a $\frac{3}{4}$ length shank. Some dancers hammer the boxes or slam the box in a door jamb to soften them. I've seen dancers step on their shoes to flatten the box, pound the tip of their shoe on the floor and deliberately "over arch" in their shoe to help break them in. All these techniques shorten the life of the shoe and change the characteristics of the shoe that the manufacturer intended. Yes, a lot of dancers use these techniques, but user beware.....you may be

buying a new pair of shoes sooner than you want to if you accidentally break a shank or over-soften the box.

My daughter's friend/teacher recommends one specific brand of pointe shoes, can my daughter be fit in that brand?

Pointe shoe fit is very personalized. The fit depends on the proportions of the foot, how much the foot compresses when en pointe, the relative strength of the dancer's feet and legs, weight, and more. It is unlikely that your daughter shares all these characteristics with their friend or teacher. We can do our best to accommodate, but can provide no guarantees that brand will work best for your daughter.

Can I get custom shoes for my daughter?

Yes. Many manufacturers will make "special make-up" shoes. Bloch will make a trial shoe, and subsequent orders require a 6-pair minimum. Capezio and Russian Pointe require a six-pair minimum for all special make-up shoes.